Chapter 6
Improve Water Quality to Protect Human Health and the Environment

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The protection and improvement of water quality is inherent to meeting the coequal goals of the State. Water quality plays a critical role in the achievement of a more reliable water supply~~,~~ and protection, restoration, and enhancement of the Delta ecosystem. Water quality also contributes to the values of the Delta as an evolving place. ~~Public Resources Code section 29702 directly calls for improving water quality in various sections of the statute~~The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Reform Act of 2009 calls for improving water quality as follows:

> *85020. The policy of the State of California is to achieve the following objectives that the Legislature declares are inherent in the coequal goals for management of the Delta:…(e) Improve water quality to protect human health and the environment consistent with achieving water quality objectives in the Delta.*
>
> *85022(d) The fundamental goals for managing land use in the Delta are to do all of the following: … (6) Improve water quality to protect human health and the environment consistent with achieving water quality objectives in the Delta.*
>
> *85302(d) The Delta Plan shall include measures to promote a more reliable water supply that address all of the following: … (3) Improving water quality to protect human health and the environment.*
>
> *85302(e) The following subgoals and strategies for restoring a healthy ecosystem shall be included in the Delta Plan… (5) Improve water quality to meet drinking water, agriculture, and ecosystem long-term goals.*

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Chapter 6
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The Delta Reform Act acknowledges water quality as an important element of a reliable water supply and directs the Delta Stewardship Council (Council) to improve water quality to protect human health and the environment. In general, water quality is an abstract concept unless it is discussed relative to protection of the beneficial uses of that water. The Delta Reform Act highlights drinking water, agriculture, and ecosystem goals as important beneficial uses for the purpose of the Delta Plan. The Council's role with respect to water quality is to ensure that the policies and recommendations in the Delta Plan balance the protection of myriad—and sometimes competing—beneficial uses of water.

In California, the entities primarily responsible for managing water quality in the state are the nine regional water quality control boards (RWQCBs) and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). The RWQCBs are responsible for water quality planning, permitting and enforcement, and financial assistance, when funds are available. The SWRCB is responsible for statewide plans, permits, and policies, and serves as a review body for RWQCB decisions. The SWRCB also has the important and challenging task of administering the State's complex water rights system of permits and licenses. As part of these duties the SWRCB sets water quality objectives for major waterways, including the tributaries of the Delta, as described in Chapter 4. The Central Valley RWQCB is the regional board with primary jurisdiction in the Delta and Delta watershed.

Water quality in the Delta is influenced by many factors. Seasonal rainfall, snow runoff, and reservoir releases flow in from several rivers and streams, primarily the Sacramento and the San Joaquin rivers. During very high flows, some of this water flows across floodplains before it enters the Delta. Tides can bring saline waters into the Delta from the San Francisco Bay. There are also discharges from cities, industries, and agricultural lands. As all of these flows enter the Delta, they bring with them a variety of contaminants. Additionally, water is diverted from the Delta, either for use within the Delta or for use in central and southern California and other service areas. The timing and physical qualities of these flows into and out of the Delta affect the water quality needed to support the beneficial uses of Delta waters.

In achieving the coequal goals, the Council envisions a Delta where improved water quality supports a healthy ecosystem and the multiple beneficial uses of water, including municipal supply and recreational uses such as fishing and swimming. To support a more resilient and healthy Delta ecosystem, salinity patterns should be consistent with more natural flow patterns with ~~high-quality~~ inflows of high-quality water. Nutrient concentrations should support diverse and productive aquatic food webs and should not cause excessive growth of nuisance aquatic plants or blooms of harmful algae. Physical attributes of the aquatic environment, such as dissolved oxygen concentrations, temperature ranges, and turbidity levels, should support the needs of native species. At all times, the Delta should be free of harmful concentrations of toxic substances. Discharges of treated wastewater, urban runoff, or agricultural return flows should be regulated so that they do not have a negative effect on the Delta. High water quality is imperative to the coequal goals and crucial for protecting the beneficial uses of Delta water, successful restoration of aquatic habitats, and sustenance of native plants and animals.

Beneficial uses of Delta waters involve trade-offs that are important to recognize and address when establishing water quality goals. These trade-offs emerge in cases where acceptable or even ideal water quality for one use may have unintended or adverse effects on another use. For example, variable salinity levels are beneficial for many native species in the Delta, but can be problematic for agricultural or municipal uses. Bromide salts, one component of salinity, can result in cancer-causing disinfection byproducts with some water treatment methodologies. Similarly, organic carbon in drinking water sources can ~~result in cancer-causing~~contribute to harmful disinfection byproduct~~s~~ formation (Leenheer and Croue 2003). ~~, but~~However, for ecosystem purposes, organic carbon is beneficial and is increased by wetland creation. ~~(which may be part of ecosystem restoration) and provides beneficial nutrients for the Delta food web.~~ Also, wetland creation can result in increased methylation of mercury, resulting in bioaccumulation of mercury in fish species, ~~that represents~~ a threat to human health when these fish are consumed. Water quality is strongly connected to water supply, as reservoir releases to control salinity can reduce the availability of fresh water at times of the year when it is needed most. These and other issues affecting water quality policy are discussed in this chapter.

About this Chapter

This chapter discusses the trade-offs and conflicts inherent in managing water quality for multiple objectives and recommends strategies to make balanced improvements primarily through the prioritization of projects and programs. It also provides contextual information and support specific to related chapters: Chapter 3 (Provide a More Reliable Water Supply for California), Chapter 4 (Protect, Restore, and Enhance the Delta Ecosystem), and Chapter 5 (Protect and Enhance the Unique Cultural, Recreational, Natural Resources, and Agricultural Values of the California Delta as an Evolving Place.)

Other State agencies, in particular the ~~State Water Resources Control Board (~~SWRCB~~)~~ and ~~Regional Water Quality Control Boards (~~RWQCBs~~)~~, have broad authority to protect and regulate water quality. This chapter, therefore, sets forth priority Delta-specific recommendations to appropriate agencies. This chapter is not intended to provide a complete overview of all water quality issues and regulatory programs related to the Delta. Instead, its focus is on four core strategies where best available science shows the need for improved water quality to achieve the coequal goals. The core strategies are as follows:

- Require Delta-specific water quality protection
- Protect beneficial uses by managing salinity
- Improve drinking water quality
- Improve environmental water quality

These core strategies form the basis of the policies and recommendations found at the end of the chapter. These major aspects of water quality are critical to protecting human health and improving the environment, particularly in the Delta. Salinity is discussed in a separate section because of its cross-cutting importance as a defining characteristic of the estuary and its implications to ecosystem health, its linkage to water project operations, and its historical importance in the Delta. Historically, salinity has been the primary focus of Delta water quality studies and reports and has been the primary driver of water management operations.

The Delta Plan's approach to implementing these core strategies is to augment or accelerate existing programs where it is feasible to address an existing or anticipated water quality problem. However, the Delta Plan also recognizes that in some cases where it is not feasible to eliminate or mitigate a water quality problem in the Delta, relocating ~~drinking~~ water intakes may be the best approach to improve water quality ~~for human health~~.

Beneficial Uses of Water in and from the Delta

A goal of the Delta Plan is to maintain water quality at a level that supports and enhances designated beneficial uses. Table 6-1 lists the beneficial uses for water in the Delta as specified in the SWRCB's 2006 *Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta Estuary* (Bay-Delta Plan).

~~Perhaps t~~The most important part of any water quality discussion is identifying the existing and potential uses of th~~ate~~e water in question. These uses ~~then~~ drive ~~what~~ the level of water quality that must be attained, and what requirements and limitations must be placed on dischargers and diverters of that water to protect those uses. Specific discharge limitations are based on adopted science-based ~~standard~~objectives necessary to protect associated beneficial uses. These limitations are then included in discharge permits.

~~These beneficial uses are designated in the applicable water quality control plans. Table 6-1 lists the beneficial uses for water in the Delta as specified in the SWRCB's 2006 *Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta Estuary* (Bay-Delta Plan).~~

Table 6-1

Delta Water Beneficial Uses

Beneficial Use	Description
Municipal and Domestic Supply	Uses of water for community, military, or individual water supply systems including, but not limited to, drinking water supply.
Industrial Service Supply	Uses of water for industrial activities that do not depend primarily on water quality including, but not limited to, mining cooling water supply, hydraulic conveyance, gravel washing, fire protection, and oil well repressurization.
Industrial Process Supply	Uses of water for industrial activities that depend primarily on water quality.
Agricultural Supply	Uses of water for farming, horticulture, or ranching including, but not limited to, irrigation, stock watering, or support of vegetation for range grazing.
Groundwater Recharge	Uses of water for natural or artificial recharge of groundwater for purposes of future extraction, maintenance of water quality, or halting of saltwater intrusion into freshwater aquifers.
Navigation	Uses of water for shipping, travel, or other transportation by private, military, or commercial vessels.
Water Contact Recreation	Uses of water for recreational activities involving body contact with water, where ingestion of water is reasonably possible. These include, but are not limited to, swimming, wading, water skiing, skin and scuba diving, surfing, white-water activities, fishing, or use of natural hot springs.
Non-contact Water Recreation	Uses of water for recreational activities involving proximity to water, but not normally involving body contact with water, where ingestion is reasonably possible. These include, but are not limited to, picnicking, sunbathing, hiking, beachcombing, camping, boating, tide pool and marine life study, hunting, sightseeing, or aesthetic enjoyment in conjunction with the above activities.
Shellfish Harvesting	Uses of water that support habitats suitable for the collection of filter-feeding shellfish (e.g., clams, oysters, and mussels) for human consumption, commercial, or sports purposes.
Commercial and Sport Fishing	Uses of water for commercial or recreational collection of fish, shellfish, or other organisms including, but not limited to, uses involving organisms intended for human consumption or bait purposes.
Warm Freshwater Habitat	Uses of water that support warmwater ecosystems including, but not limited to, preservation of aquatic habitats, vegetation, fish, or wildlife, including invertebrates.

Table 6-1

Delta Water Beneficial Uses

Beneficial Use	Description
Cold Freshwater Habitat	Uses of water that support coldwater ecosystems including, but not limited to, preservation or enhancements of aquatic habitats, vegetation, fish, or wildlife, including invertebrates.
Migration of Aquatic Organisms	Uses of water that support habitats necessary for migration or other temporary activities by aquatic organisms, such as anadromous fish.
Spawning, Reproduction, and/or Early Development	Uses of water that support high-quality aquatic habitats suitable for reproduction and early development of fish.
Estuarine Habitat	Uses of water that support estuarine ecosystems including, but not limited to, preservation or enhancement of estuarine habitats, vegetation, fish, shellfish, or wildlife (e.g., estuarine mammals, waterfowl, shorebirds).
Wildlife Habitat	Uses of water that support estuarine ecosystems including, but not limited to, preservation and enhancement of terrestrial habitats, vegetation, wildlife (e.g., mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates), or wildlife water and food sources.
Rare, Threatened, or Endangered Species	Uses of water that support habitats necessary, at least in part, for the survival and successful maintenance of plant or animal species established under State or federal law as being rare, threatened, or endangered.

Source: SWRCB 2006

Factors Influencing Water Quality in the Delta

This section provides an overview of factors that influence~~s~~ water quality in the Delta and existing water quality regulations. Water quality in the Delta is influenced by factors such as:

- Freshwater inflows and outflows
- In-Delta land use
- Dredging
- The Delta levee system
- Tides
- Point source inputs of pollutants
- Nonpoint source inputs of pollutants
- In-Delta water use
- Export diversions and operations

Generally, water quality is better in the northern Delta than in the central and southern Delta because higher quality Sacramento River inflows are greater than inflows from the San Joaquin River, and the proportion of agricultural water use and drainage in the San Joaquin Valley is greater than in the Sacramento Valley. The SWRCB has listed Delta waterways (various streams, rivers, and sloughs in the Delta), the Carquinez Strait, and San Francisco Bay as having impaired water quality pursuant to the federal Clean Water Act (CWA) section 303(d) list[1] (SWRCB 2010~~a~~). ~~Current p~~Pollutants of concern include insecticides, herbicides, mercury, selenium, nutrients, and legacy organic pollutants such as dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). Additional water quality issues in the Delta include temperature, salinity, turbidity, low dissolved oxygen, bromide, dissolved

[1] The "303(d) list" is~~ short for~~ the list of impaired and threatened waters (stream/river segments, lakes) that states have identified as not meeting water quality standards and other requirements. Under section 303(d), the law requires that states establish priority rankings for waters on the list and develop total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) for these waters.

organic carbon, pathogens, and harmful algal blooms. Amounts of these constituents that are too high (or in some cases too low) can impair the ability of these waters to support beneficial uses, such as municipal water supply, recreational use, agricultural water supply, and habitat that supports healthy fish and wildlife populations. See Chapter 4 for additional discussion on how these water quality stressors can affect the Delta and its ecosystem.

Protecting Water Quality Is a Balancing Act

Water quality is central to the State's goals for the Delta – restoring the Delta ecosystem and providing for a more reliable water supply, while protecting and enhancing the Delta as a unique and evolving place. Conditions that affect water quality must be managed and balanced in a way that allows these goals to be met simultaneously. When one use is protected, steps must be taken to minimize impacts on other uses. The following examples of this interconnectedness illustrate the difficulty of the challenge at hand.

Water supply for agricultural, municipal, and industrial use requires control of chemical constituents like salinity, and certain pollutants that could pose a threat to human health. Efforts to protect, enhance, and restore the Delta ecosystem, however, require the management of volume and timing of flows to provide beneficially variable salinity for certain species and sufficient freshwater for others. This management regime must also consider management of nutrients and suspended solids to ensure a viable food chain within the Delta.

Protecting the communities within the Delta and their water use involves many of these same salinity and pollutant controls that are important for any water supply, but water quality in the Delta must also support recreational uses such as swimming, fishing, and boating. Cumulative discharges of pollutants from Delta communities and from recreational craft can affect in-Delta uses. Sea level rise caused by climate change will affect in-Delta water use and the manner in which flows are managed to meet water quality demands. Levee construction and placement is important to guard against flooding that could threaten in-Delta and exported water supplies. In addition, levee construction can either disrupt ecosystem processes or help provide important habitat benefits, depending on the project's location and individual attributes.

~~Many factors affecting water quality in the Delta are interrelated. Meeting conditions necessary for ecosystem restoration may affect levee construction and placement. Levee failure could threaten water supplies within and for use outside the Delta. Cumulative discharges from Delta communities and recreational craft can affect in-Delta uses. Sea level rise caused by climate change will affect in-Delta water use and the manner in which flows are managed to meet water quality demands.~~

Climate Change

Impacts on water quality from climate change are difficult to predict. However, a recent analysis by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) suggests that climate change poses a significant threat to water quality (Cloern et al. 2011). Increases in sea level would increase salinity intrusion into the Delta, threatening water quality for agricultural and municipal uses. Increased air and water temperatures would result in increased runoff amounts in winter, with less in spring and summer. Warmer water can directly affect the life cycle of many fish species and stimulate growth of nuisance aquatic plants or blooms of harmful algae, which can lead to decreases in dissolved oxygen and increases in organic carbon. Increased runoff in the winter could result in more erosion and greater pulses of pollutants.

Existing Water Quality Regulations

Many different agencies have a role in the regulation of water quality in the Delta. The SWRCB and the RWQCBs have primary responsibility over discharges affecting beneficial uses of water in California with the oversight of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). Drinking water supply is regulated by the California Department of Public Health, also with oversight by USEPA. Additionally, the California Department of Pesticide Regulation regulates the sale and use of pesticides, which affect water quality. (See sidebar,~~:~~ A Water Quality Success Story.)

The RWQCBs develop water quality control plans (known as Basin Plans) that establish water quality standards and implementation plans for achieving standards for all surface water and groundwater in their respective regions. Water quality standards include identification of beneficial uses, numeric and narrative water quality objectives to protect those uses, and water quality control policies. The RWQCBs issue discharge permits and requirements that specify the amounts of pollutants that may be discharged based on these objectives. Although these permits are intended to ensure protection of these beneficial uses, some water bodies continue to exceed standards, and beneficial uses are not being protected. These impaired water bodies are identified and listed pursuant to federal CWA section 303(d).

Placement of a water body on the CWA 303(d) list initiates a process to develop a pollution limit, or TMDL, to address each pollutant causing the impairment. A TMDL defines how much of a pollutant a water body can tolerate and still meet water quality standards. The TMDL must account for all ~~the~~ sources of a pollutant, including point sources and nonpoint sources (discharges from wastewater treatment facilities; runoff from urban areas, agricultural inputs, and ~~runoff from~~ streets or highways; "toxic hot spots"; and aerial deposition). In addition to accounting for past and current activities, TMDLs may also consider projected future population growth that could increase pollutant levels. The TMDL identifies allocations for point sources and for nonpoint sources, and includes a margin of safety to account for uncertainty. An implementation plan is developed that specifies a set of actions that must be carried out to ensure that the TMDL results in achievement of water quality standards. TMDLs are usually implemented through amendments to the appropriate Basin Plan, which, in turn, will result in ~~improved~~ changes to discharge permits as they are reissued. Once a TMDL is approved, it may be some time before the necessary studies are completed to set and apportion specific discharge limitations among all dischargers and potential dischargers.

A WATER QUALITY SUCCESS STORY

Widespread use of the organophosphorus pesticide diazinon in the Central Valley and episodes of aquatic toxicity caused the Central Valley ~~Regional Water Quality Control Board~~RWQCB to add the Sacramento and Feather rivers to its list of impaired water bodies in 1994. A total maximum daily load for diazinon was adopted in 2003. Stakeholders also took action to implement a diazinon control strategy, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the California Department of Pesticide Regulation took steps to restrict approved uses of diazinon. Grants from the USEPA, the former CALFED Bay-Delta Program, and other agencies provided funding support for control program implementation and research throughout the Central Valley region, including the San Joaquin River.

These water quality control efforts have helped to reduce levels of diazinon to the point that violations of water quality standards in the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers are rare. Although pesticide pollution is still a problem in parts of some Central Valley streams and rivers, the experience with diazinon shows that programs to address these and other water quality problems can be effective (USEPA 2010).

DP-185

The 2008-2010 Integrated Report (SWRCB 2010~~a~~), which includes the 303(d) list, prioritizes TMDLs to be developed for each water body-pollutant combination on the CWA section 303(d) list, and establishes schedules for completion of the TMDLs. Approved TMDLs and TMDLs under development are listed in Table 6-2.

Table 6-2
TMDLs Approved and under Development in the Central Valley, Delta, and Suisun Bay

Water Bodies	Pollutants	Status
American River	Mercury	Under Development
Cache Creek, Bear Creek, Harley Gulch	Mercury	Approved
Central Valley	Organochlorine Pesticides	Under Development
Central Valley	Pesticides	Under Development
Clear Lake	Mercury	Approved
Clear Lake	Nutrients	Approved
Grasslands	Selenium	Approved
North San Francisco Bay (includes Suisun Bay)	Selenium	Under Development
Sacramento and Feather Rivers	Diazinon	Approved
Sacramento County Urban Creeks	Diazinon and Chlorpyrifos	Approved
Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta	Diazinon and Chlorpyrifos	Approved
Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta	Mercury	Approved
Salt Slough	Selenium	Approved
San Francisco Bay (includes Suisun Bay)	Mercury	Approved
San Francisco Bay (includes Suisun Bay)	PCBs	Approved
San Francisco Bay Area Urban Creeks	Diazinon/Pesticide Toxicity	Approved
San Joaquin River	Salt and Boron	Approved
San Joaquin River	Diazinon and Chlorpyrifos	Approved
San Joaquin River	Selenium	Approved
Stockton Deep Water Ship Channel (Phase I)	Dissolved Oxygen	Approved
Stockton Deep Water Ship Channel (Phase II)	Dissolved Oxygen	Under Development
Stockton Urban Sloughs	Dissolved Oxygen	Under Development
Stockton Urban Water Bodies	Pathogens	Approved
Suisun Marsh	Dissolved Oxygen	Under Development
Suisun Marsh	Mercury	Under Development
Upper Sacramento River	Cadmium, Copper, and Zinc	Approved

Sources: Central Valley RWQCB 2011; San Francisco Bay RWQCB 2011a

On February 10, 2011, the USEPA issued an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (USEPA 2011) as part of an effort to assess the effectiveness of current water quality programs designed to protect aquatic species in the San Francisco Bay and the Delta (referred to here as the Bay-Delta). The document identified key water quality issues affecting Bay-Delta aquatic resources and summarized current research for each of these issues, including total ammonia, selenium, pesticides, emerging contaminants, and other parameters affecting estuarine habitat and the migratory corridors of anadromous fish. The notice was intended to solicit public comment on possible USEPA actions to address water quality conditions affecting the Bay-Delta. USEPA may make changes to programs in the Bay-Delta through a formal rulemaking process as a result of further evaluation and consideration of public comment. These changes could affect federal water quality programs administered by the State.

Water quality in the Delta is also regulated by the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), which has jurisdiction on all tidal areas of the Bay, including Suisun Bay and

Suisun Marsh. BCDC policies regarding water quality are intended to prevent the release of pollution into Bay waters to the greatest extent feasible. The BCDC makes decisions regarding water quality impacts based on evaluation by and the advice of the San Francisco Bay RWQCB. The BCDC reviews State and federal actions, permits, projects, licenses, and grants affecting the Bay, including Suisun Marsh, pursuant to the federal Coastal Zone Management Act.

In the Delta and the Suisun Marsh, the *Water Quality Control Plan for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary* (commonly referred to as the Bay-Delta Plan) establishes water quality objectives for which implementation is achieved through assigning responsibilities to water right holders and water users (SWRCB 2006). (See sidebar,~~:~~ Water Board Regulation and the Bay-Delta Plan.) This is because the parameters to be controlled are significantly affected by flows and diversions; these responsibilities were established in Water Rights Decision 1641 in 1999. The Bay-Delta Plan also provides protection for beneficial uses that require control of salinity and operations of the various water projects in the Delta, including the State Water Project (SWP) and Central Valley Project (CVP) (SWRCB 2006).

The SWRCB and RWQCBs are the regulatory agencies with statutory authority to adopt water quality control plans, including regulating waters for which water quality standards are required by the federal CWA (Water Code sections 13170 and 13240). The Council recognizes the SWRCB's role and authority in regulating water quality, and supports and encourages the timely development and enforcement of programs (for example, water quality objectives and waste discharge requirements, TMDLs, and National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System [NPDES] permits) to reduce pollutant loads that are causing water quality impairments in the Delta. The Council also supports and encourages the completion of the elements of the SWRCB's 2010 *Update to Strategic Plan 2008-2012* (June 2010) and the *Strategic Workplan for Activities in the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento–San Joaquin River Delta Estuary* (July 2008) prepared by the SWRCB, Central Valley RWQCB, and San Francisco Bay RWQCB.

Salinity in the Delta

The Delta is an estuary, and like any estuary, fresh water from rivers and tributaries flows downstream where it mixes with salt water. ~~As fresh water flows into the Delta, it picks up salt from municipal and agricultural discharges. Tidal effects from the Pacific Ocean and the San Francisco Bay create an estuary where this fresh water mixes with salt water.~~ The location, extent, and dynamics of the freshwater-saltwater interface are important drivers of many estuarine (ecological) processes and important considerations in water management for human uses. The geographic extent of water of the correct salinity is important to many estuarine species as it is an important characteristic of their habitat. Crops vary in their tolerance of salt content in water used for irrigation, and salinity can reduce yields of sensitive crops at relatively low levels. Salt in municipal water supplies increases corrosion of pipes and appliances, can affect taste, and can contribute to the formation of disinfection byproducts that are harmful to human health. The management-intensive regulation of salinity in the Delta for multiple benefits is another example of the highly altered system the Delta has become. This section provides a summary of the history of Delta salinity problems and the effects of salinity on agricultural, municipal, and industrial water use.

WATER BOARD REGULATION AND THE BAY-DELTA PLAN

Water Quality Criteria, Objectives, and Standards. The ~~State Water Resources Control Board (~~SWRCB~~)~~ and ~~Regional Water Quality Control Board~~RWQCBs have primary responsibility for the regulation of discharges and control of pollutants that affect California's surface and groundwater resources.

The water boards do this by using scientific studies and information to first determine the water quality *criteria* that are needed for specific beneficial uses of that water. Examples of beneficial uses include drinking water use, agricultural use, recreation, and others listed in the ~~*2006 Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta Estuary* (~~Bay-Delta Plan~~)~~. The water quality criteria are then used to develop water quality objectives.

Water quality *objectives* account for additional information such as economic impacts, effects on other uses, available technology, and similar factors. Water quality objectives are considered equivalent to water quality *standards* required by the ~~U.S. Environmental Protection Agency~~USEPA. The ~~water boards~~RWQCBs adopt water quality control plans that contain these objectives; they identify specific beneficial uses of each water body covered by that plan, and specific water quality objectives to protect those uses. These plans are then used to issue general or site-specific discharge permits with specific pollutant discharge limitations.

Section 303(d) of the federal ~~Clean Water Act~~CWA requires that California create a listing of impaired water bodies that are not meeting water quality standards. Water bodies on this 303(d) list require development of a ~~total maximum daily load (~~TMDL~~)~~, which establishes a limitation on the amount of pollution that water body can be exposed to without adversely affecting its beneficial uses. This TMDL allocates proportions of the total limitation among dischargers to the impaired surface water. TMDLs typically result in changes to water quality control plans, so that existing and future permits contain pollutant limits or other provisions necessary to ensure that the water quality standards are met.

Flow Objectives. The SWRCB is responsible for administering and overseeing the right to take and use water in California. Where storage, transport, diversion, and use of water threatens to adversely affect water quality and beneficial uses, the SWRCB may adopt plans that set objectives for water quality and flow where necessary to protect beneficial uses. As a special kind of water quality objective~~s~~, *flow objectives* are developed based on scientifically developed information and account for other factors, such as economic impacts and effects on other uses, such as water supply and agricultural use physical constraints, among others.

The Bay-Delta Plan. In the case of the Delta, the SWRCB has adopted the Bay-Delta Plan. This plan contains water quality objectives, including flow objectives. The Delta Reform Act required that certain flow criteria be developed, which the SWRCB completed in 2010.

In early 2012, the SWRCB officially launched the comprehensive review of the Bay-Delta Plan. The w~~W~~ater q~~Q~~uality c~~C~~ontrol p~~P~~lanning phase of this review will include review of potential modifications to current objectives included in the Bay-Delta Plan, the potential establishment of new objectives, and modifications to the program of implementation for those objectives. It will also include potential changes to the monitoring and special studies program included in the Bay-Delta Plan. The ~~W~~water q~~Q~~uality c~~C~~ontrol p~~P~~lanning process will not include amendments to water rights and other measures to implement a revised Bay-Delta Plan. A separate environmental impact report will be prepared for these actions. In addition, a separate substitute environmental document is being prepared to address updates to the water quality objectives for the protection of southern Delta agricultural beneficial uses, San Joaquin River flow objectives for the protection of fish and wildlife beneficial uses, and the program of implementation for those objectives.

DP-186

History and Causes of Delta Salinity Problems

The location of the freshwater-saltwater interface in the estuary shifts with the seasons and the tides and from year to year depending on the amount of precipitation, water diversions, and Delta outflow (Kimmerer 2004; Malamud-Roam et al. 2007; Stahle et al. 2011). The location, extent, and dynamics of this freshwater-saltwater gradient has changed over the past 150 years because of landscape modification, water management and flood management infrastructure such as dams and conveyance facilities, channel dredging, and climate change.

Figure 6-1 is a representation of salinity over a range of concentrations relevant to suitability for water supply. It shows the salinity gradient in the western Delta under high and low outflow conditions. Changes in seasonal inflow to the Delta caused by upstream diversions, storage of water behind the State and federal water project dams, and operation of the State and federal Delta pumps have generally shifted the salinity gradient upstream and have changed seasonal and interannual salinity patterns. Even with these measurable shifts in salinity caused by diversion, storage, and conveyance of water, a primary driver of seasonal and annual salinity variability in the western Delta and Suisun Marsh continues to be the amount of precipitation in the watershed (Enright and Culberson 2010).

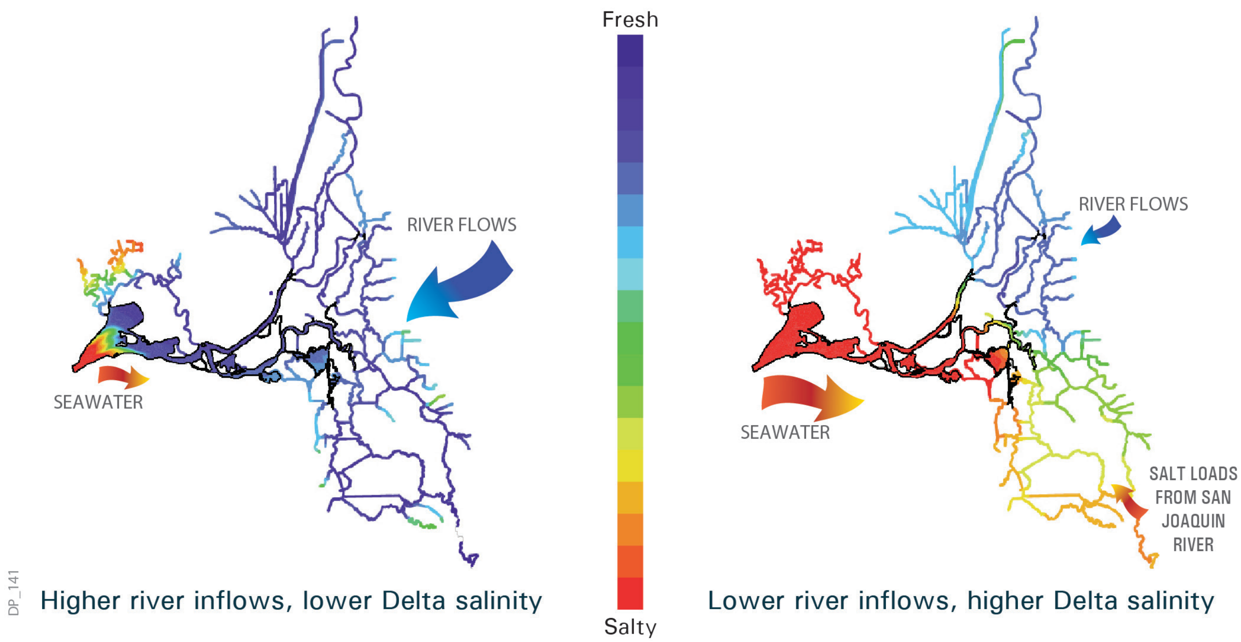

Figure 6-1

Salinity in the Delta Varies by Inflow Volumes

Delta salinity varies with inflow and outflow. Very high flows (left) push fresh water well into Suisun Bay and produce low-salinity conditions throughout the Delta. During very low flow periods (right), sea water can be seen pushing into the interior Delta from Suisun Bay with high salinity also entering from the San Joaquin River in the southeastern Delta.

Source: Images created by Resource Management Associates, cited in CALFED Bay-Delta Program report to Central Valley Drinking Water Policy Workgroup 2007

NOTE: This graphic has been modified from the final staff draft (May 14, 2012) to make a stylistic correction.

The ~~E~~examination of tree rings throughout the mountains of California provides a good indicator of precipitation over the last 650 years, but tree rings alone cannot accurately reproduce the details of Delta salinity over this period (Stahle et al. 2011). However, strong evidence indicates that the western Delta was a freshwater ecosystem for 2,500 years before human modification in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Malamud-Roam and Ingram 2004). Channel dredging, significant reductions in tidal marsh area, and levee construction have changed Delta salinity by increasing the strength of tides in the Delta, increasing connections between channels, and reducing the moderating effects of wetlands and floodplains on outflow. Consequently, simply allowing more variability in Delta outflow will not produce the same salinity patterns that existed before development.

Although sea water is the primary source of salinity in the western Delta and Suisun Marsh, it is not the only source. Agricultural drainage is another significant source of salinity, particularly in the San Joaquin Valley. Municipal and industrial discharges also can locally increase salinity, although such salinity increases are generally small compared to increases from brackish water inputs. All surface waters and groundwaters contain some amount of salt, and this salt is concentrated with use through evaporation and transpiration of water by plants (Central Valley Drinking Water Policy Workgroup 2007). The remaining water in drainage, agricultural return flows, or percolated groundwater has a higher salt concentration than the supply water. This normal increase in salinity with water use is exacerbated in some parts of the

San Joaquin Valley by naturally occurring salts in soils and a Delta water supply that already ~~has a~~ includes ~~significant~~ salt. Some of the salt load in the San Joaquin Valley accumulates in groundwater, affecting ~~groundwater for~~ a variety of uses. Another manifestation of the salt problem is elevated salinity in the San Joaquin River at the point where it enters the Delta; this level is much higher than in the Sacramento River and marginally meets applicable water quality standards for much of the year. At times, salinity from sea water mixing into the western Delta and salinity from the San Joaquin River creates a Delta with a "freshwater corridor" leading from the Sacramento River to the State and federal water export pumps in the south Delta.

Salinity in the Delta Ecosystem

The role of water quality characteristics in ecosystem function, including salinity, temperature, turbidity, and dissolved oxygen, is discussed in detail in Chapter 4. Salinity is a defining characteristic of habitat for estuarine organisms and perhaps the most important water quality characteristic affecting municipal, industrial, and agricultural water use. However, salinity patterns that benefit native species are sometimes in conflict with human uses of water.

The salinity tolerances and preferences of fish vary by species. Delta smelt spawn in freshwater, but juveniles and adults generally show a preference for salinity in the range of 0.5 to 5 parts per thousand (ppt). Adult longfin smelt tolerate a much wider range of salinity and thrive in salinities greater than 5 ppt. Splittail do well in a wide range of salinities from fresh water up to 18 ppt (Moyle 2002). Largemouth bass and bluegill, introduced species, prefer fresh water and are rarely found at salinities greater than 1 to 2 ppt. The location, extent, and dynamics of the freshwater-saltwater interface in the Bay-Delta is an important factor in the distribution and abundance of many fish, invertebrate, and plant species, and is largely determined by the amount of fresh water flowing from the Delta west into Suisun Bay.

The interface between fresh water and salt water is a critical region of the estuary for many native fish and other organisms. Although there is no broadly accepted definition, the low salinity zone (LSZ) of the estuary is generally considered to be the region with salinity ranging from fresh water up to about 5 ppt, about one-seventh the salinity of sea water. The part of the salinity gradient centered on 2 ppt is considered to be of particular importance because it is hypothesized to be an area where suspended particulate matter and organisms accumulate. The location in the Bay-Delta where the tidally averaged salinity at 1 meter from the bottom is 2 ppt is known as X2 (measured as distance in kilometers from the Golden Gate Bridge) and serves as a water quality objective to regulate Delta outflow. The endangered Delta smelt show a preference for the LSZ. Their distribution during most of the year is centered near X2 (Nobriga et al. 2008). The position of X2 is also correlated with the abundance of several estuarine fish and invertebrates such as the bay shrimp and longfin smelt. That is, higher outflows (X2 located closer to the Golden Gate Bridge) are correlated with greater abundance of longfin smelt and bay shrimp (Kimmerer 2004). However, the processes linking greater Delta outflow with the abundance of estuarine species in the Bay-Delta system are not clearly understood, and continue to be studied and debated.

One proposed mechanism for the benefits of X2 as a regulatory marker for Delta smelt and other pelagic species is its relationship to the extent of low-salinity habitat. Lower values of X2 place it in the vicinity of Grizzly and Suisun bays, which results in a much larger area of low-salinity habitat than when X2 is located upstream of the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers. One of the potential negative effects of climate change will be a reduction in the availability of suitable low-salinity habitat for Delta smelt. The combined effects of sea level rise and changes in other aspects of estuarine habitat caused by climate change and increased water diversions are likely to pose a significant threat to the future survival of Delta smelt (Feyrer et al. 2011). Additional information on the relationship between flows in the Delta, the low-salinity zone, and implications for ecosystem health is included in Chapter 4.

Effects of Salinity on Agricultural Water Use

As noted in Chapter 5, agricultural use of water in the Delta is a significant factor in the health of the Delta's regional economy. The effect of salinity on agricultural water use varies by crop, soil type, and other factors (Hoffman 2010). The existing water quality objective, designed to protect the most sensitive crops, is set by the SWRCB at 700 microsiemens per centimeter (µS/cm) during the irrigation season and 1,000 µS/cm for the remainder of the year in southern Delta channels. At 700 µS/cm, water is relatively fresh, approximately equivalent to a salinity of 0.37 ppt (about 1%). The SWRCB is reviewing this objective based on the most recent information about the impacts of salinity on typical Delta crops. Salts from upstream and in-Delta agricultural drainage and from seawater intrusion from the Bay can affect agricultural water use in the Delta. Poor flow circulation in some parts of the Delta resulting from water diversions and historical channelization can exacerbate salinity problems.

Water quality to protect agricultural water use in the southern Delta is controlled through a combination of San Joaquin River inflow, export pumping, and Delta outflow changes. When salinity threatens to exceed water quality objectives for the San Joaquin River near Vernalis, additional high-quality water is released from New Melones Reservoir. The effect of these releases is tempered by the installation and operation of flow barriers in the southern Delta to benefit agriculture. Salinity from seawater intrusion is reduced through a combination of reservoir releases, gate closures, and export pumping changes that, when necessary, control Delta outflow. Any significant changes to the way that water moves into or through the Delta, such as sea level rise, changed conveyance, changed inflow, or changed outflow, will change salinity patterns in the Delta.

Water quality at the SWP and CVP export pumps in the southern Delta, while usually meeting all applicable standards for municipal and agricultural use, is significantly higher in salinity than Sacramento River inflow to the Delta. Allowing salinity to vary in a way that might benefit native species could affect agricultural and municipal uses of Delta water.

Effects of Salinity on Municipal and Industrial Water Uses

Salinity contamination of municipal water supplies, as described in the following section on drinking water quality, can make water unpalatable, contributes to the formation of harmful disinfection byproducts, and increases corrosion of pipes and equipment. The existing objectives for protection of municipal and industrial beneficial uses in the southern Delta, expressed as limits on concentration of chloride, were developed to protect former industrial uses, but have been retained because they also protect drinking water quality. Secondary standards (standards that apply to esthetic properties) for drinking water supplies also apply to water exported from the Delta by the CVP and SWP.

Under the current salinity regulations and operations practices for Delta water, municipal and industrial water supplies generally meet all salinity objectives. However, sea level rise, Delta levee failures, and increasing salt from upstream all threaten Delta municipal and industrial water supplies. Removing salts from water supplies is technically possible, although difficult and expensive, and disposing of the concentrated salt waste stream remains a key challenge. Increased salinity further affects the reliability of municipal and industrial water supplies by reducing opportunities for water reuse and recycling (Healey et al. 2008), in turn potentially increasing reliance on imported surface water. Moving Delta intakes upstream, away from the influence of seawater intrusion and San Joaquin River inflow, could substantially reduce these water supply threats and is the subject of analysis under the current Bay Delta Conservation Plan process.

The salinity regime in the Delta is driven by natural flows, water management, and human land and water uses in the Delta and its watershed. Achieving the coequal goals will require updated comprehensive flow objectives and water quality control programs for salinity that balance ecosystem and water supply needs. The SWRCB must pay significant attention to the examination and resolution of these water quality issues in its development of new Delta flow requirements and as new plans for Delta conveyance are developed.

Drinking Water Quality

Water moving through the Delta contributes some part of the ~~is used as a~~ drinking water suppllies~~y, either solely or partially,~~ for more than 25 million Californians. It is also used extensively for body-contact recreation such as swimming and water skiing. At the current locations where Delta water is diverted for municipal use, the water sometimes contains relatively high concentrations of bromide, organic carbon, nutrients, and dissolved solids (salinity). These drinking water constituents of concern are not directly harmful in drinking water, but they lead to formation of harmful chemicals during drinking water treatment, or contribute to taste, odor, or other municipal water supply problems. Sources of these drinking water constituents of concern include natural processes, such as tidal mixing of sea water into the Delta, and the flux of water and organic matter from wetlands, as well as urban runoff, agricultural runoff, and municipal wastewater discharge. Pathogenic (infectious) protozoa, bacteria, and viruses are also present in Delta waters and are a disease risk for both drinking water and body-contact recreation.

The future of water quality is a major concern for municipalities using Delta water. Current water quality regulations and policies for surface waters do not directly apply to many of the drinking water quality constituents of concern. Sea level rise, levee failure, salinity variability, agricultural water use, and increased urban runoff due to population growth in the watershed all pose a threat to drinking water quality. Clear policies regarding the protection of water quality relevant to the drinking water quality constituents of concern are needed to prevent such degradation. The Central Valley RWQCB is developing a drinking water policy that is, in part, intended to prevent the degradation of high-quality drinking water sources (Central Valley RWQCB 2010).

Disinfection Byproducts

Treatment of public water supplies is necessary to prevent disease caused by pathogenic organisms. However, bromide and organic carbon in municipal water supplies contribute to the formation of harmful disinfection byproducts when water is treated for domestic use (Healey et al. 2008,~~;~~ AWWA 2011). (See sidebar: Disinfection Byproducts.) The disinfection byproducts of primary concern in tap water, such as trihalomethanes, haloacetic acids, and bromates, are carcinogens subject to stringent public health standards. Treatment of water from the Delta is particularly challenging because it can contain elevated levels of both bromide and organic carbon (DWR 2007). Changes to drinking water treatment processes to reduce the amounts of disinfection byproducts in tap water are technologically challenging and can significantly increase the cost of drinking water treatment (Chen et al. 2010).

Organic carbon (total or dissolved) is an aggregate measure of the amount of a wide variety of organic compounds in water. In fresh water, these compounds typically come largely from decaying plant material. Along with bromide, elevated concentrations of organic carbon contribute to formation of disinfection byproducts. The amount of disinfection byproduct varies with the type and source of organic carbon, but total organic carbon concentration is nearly always correlated with disinfection byproduct formation. Large-scale restoration of wetlands could increase the amount of disinfection byproducts formed in Delta water used for municipal supplies due to an increased amount of total organic carbon and the greater disinfection byproduct formation potential of wetland-derived organic carbon (Kraus et al. 2008).

DISINFECTION BYPRODUCTS

Disinfection byproducts are formed when disinfectants used in water treatment plants react with bromide and/or natural organic matter (decaying vegetation) present in the source water. Different disinfectants produce different types or amounts of disinfection byproducts. Disinfection byproducts identified in drinking water include trihalomethanes (THMs), haloacetic acids, and bromates. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has established regulations for these contaminants and set the maximum contaminant levels (MCL) to prevent health effects (40 Code of Federal Regulations Part 141).

Trihalomethanes (THM) are a group of four chemicals formed along with other disinfection byproducts when chlorine or other disinfectants used to control microbial contaminants in drinking water react with naturally occurring organic and inorganic matter in water. The THMs are chloroform, bromodichloromethane, dibromochloromethane, and bromoform. THM violations are the primary difficulty for drinking water systems that use water from the Delta, especially the smaller systems. Some people who drink water containing total THMs in excess of the MCL over many years could experience liver, kidney, or central nervous system problems and increased risk of cancer.

Haloacetic acids are a group of chemicals formed along with other disinfection byproducts when chlorine or other disinfectants used to control microbial contaminants in drinking water react with naturally occurring organic and inorganic matter in water. Haloacetic acids include monochloroacetic acid, dichloroacetic acid, trichloroacetic acid, monobromoacetic acid, and dibromoacetic acid. Some people who drink water containing haloacetic acids in excess of the MCL over many years may have an increased risk of cancer.

Bromate is a chemical formed when ozone used to disinfect drinking water reacts with ~~naturally occurring~~ bromide ~~found~~ in source water. Bromate formation is a problem for drinking water systems that use ozone as the primary disinfectant. Bromate violations are uncommon, but are a concern during low-flow years when seawater intrusion causes bromide concentrations in Delta water to increase. Some people who drink water containing bromate in excess of the MCL over many years may have an increased risk of cancer.

DP-187

Salinity

Salinity, frequently measured as electrical conductivity or total dissolved solids, has several significant effects on the use of water for domestic uses. Salts make water unpalatable at relatively low concentrations, with 500 ppm~~t~~ total dissolved solids set as the recommended maximum level in the California secondary drinking water standards (California Code of Regulations, Title 22, section 64449). Salinity also increases the cost of treatment and costs to the consumer due to corrosion and other factors (Howitt et al. 2009). One common component of sea water, bromide, is a disinfection byproduct precursor that forms trihalomethanes and haloacetic acids with chlorine or chloramine disinfection, and forms bromate with ozone disinfection.

Pathogens

Pathogenic organisms and pathogen indicators are found in most surface waters. Two common protozoan pathogens that cause gastroenteritis, *Giardia lamblia* and *Cryptosporidium parvum*, have been found in Delta waters (at generally low levels) with respect to drinking water sources or body-contact recreation (Tetra Tech 2007). Source waters that exceed drinking water regulatory thresholds for *Cryptosporidium* trigger additional pathogen removal requirements (USEPA 2004). Although available data do not demonstrate that such conditions currently exist at Delta municipal water supply intakes, future plans that move or create new water intakes could result in increased treatment costs. Pathogen indicators such as fecal coliforms or *E. coli* are frequently at levels of concern in urban stormwater runoff. Several urban creeks and Delta water bodies that receive urban runoff are listed as impaired due to the presence of these indicator bacteria.

Nutrients

In the Delta, drinking water supplies with excessive levels of nutrients are primarily of concern because they, along with other factors such as residence time and temperature, can stimulate algae growth in the Delta and in reservoirs (Tetra Tech 2006a,~~;~~ Izaguirre and Taylor 2007). Algal blooms in storage reservoirs can disrupt treatment processes and cause taste and odor problems. Taste and odor complaints associated with Delta water supplies have been attributed to algae growth in reservoirs or in the Delta itself (DWR 2007).

Drinking Water Intakes

The quality of Delta water with respect to drinking water use varies considerably both geographically and over time. Average organic carbon and bromide concentrations are very low in the Sacramento River where it enters the Delta. San Joaquin River water is moderately high in bromide, salinity, and nutrients, and moderately high in organic carbon. Intakes in the west Delta can be strongly influenced by the estuarine salinity gradient. An intake for the City of Antioch is frequently out of use because of salinity intrusions. The North Bay Aqueduct intake on Barker Slough in the northwest Delta is strongly affected by the local watershed and has the highest average organic carbon concentrations of any Delta municipal water supply intake (Tetra Tech 2006b). In addition to the drinking water quality problems at the current North Bay Aqueduct intake location, the intake may also have a negative effect on the ecosystem because it is located in an area that is otherwise high-quality habitat for listed native fish species.

Groundwater Quality Concerns

The drinking water supply from groundwater for many communities in the Delta and areas served by water exported from the Delta is contaminated by nitrates and other pollutants, particularly in the San Joaquin Valley. Survey findings show that a high financial burden is borne by low-income households when it comes to nitrate-contaminated water (Pacific Institute 2011). The high cost of accessing water from alternative sources, coupled with the low earnings of these households, often makes safe drinking water in these communities unaffordable (Pacific Institute 2011). Small community and private water systems throughout the Central Valley and in the Delta rely on groundwater as their primary source of drinking water. They are affected by groundwater contamination to a greater degree than larger public water systems because many are in areas that are vulnerable to contamination (SWRCB 2011). Their wells are often shallower than larger community systems, and they have limited resources to treat or respond to contaminated groundwater problems. More information on groundwater and how it relates to the Delta can be found in Chapter 3.

Environmental Water Quality

The Delta ecosystem is affected by a variety of pollutants discharged into Delta and tributary waters. Pollutants of concern affecting Delta biological species and ecosystem processes include nutrients, pesticides, mercury, selenium, and other persistent bioaccumulative toxic substances. Newly identified pollutants of potential concern (often referred to as emerging contaminants) also need to be investigated.

Nutrients

Nutrients, and their potential benefits and problems, have become an increasingly important component in the discussion of water quality issues in the Delta. The role of nutrients and nutrient loading for the Delta and Suisun Marsh is a subject of debate. Plant nutrients of concern in water are primarily nitrogen and phosphorus compounds including ammonia, ammonium, nitrite, nitrate, and phosphate. Excessive amounts (over fertilization) or altered proportions of these nutrients in streams, rivers, lakes, estuaries, or the coastal ocean can have detrimental effects on ecosystems. Die-offs of algae ~~depleting~~ that deplete oxygen and caus~~ing~~e fish kills ~~is~~ are a well-known example, but even less obvious effects of nutrients can have important impacts on aquatic ecosystems. Changes in the types of algae that form the base of the aquatic food web, including growth of toxic algae, have been linked to excessive amounts or altered ratios of plant nutrients. Recent and current research is reconsidering the role of nutrients for aquatic ecosystems of the Delta, as follows:

- **Ammonium.** Ammonium in Delta waters has been shown to affect ecosystem water quality. Dugdale et al. (2007) has ~~identified~~ determined that ammonium concentrations may be having a significant impact on phytoplankton composition and open-water food webs because of suppression of diatom blooms in the Bay-Delta. Ammonium concentrations in Suisun Bay and the Delta have been increasing, primarily due to point source discharge loading from wastewater treatment facilities. It is not known, however, how much this inhibition extends to freshwater algae in the Delta.

- **Nutrient r~~R~~atios.** Ratios of nutrients in Delta waters are thought to be a primary driver in the composition of aquatic food webs in the Bay-Delta (Glibert et al. 2011). The effect of ammonium on food webs in the Delta remains an open question ~~with~~ and much active research and healthy scientific debate continue.

- **Harmful a~~A~~lgal ~~B~~blooms (HABs).** HABs create a toxic environment for aquatic organisms and the organisms that eat them. The emergence of HABs over the past decade threatens environmental water quality. The shift toward greater abundance of cyanobacteria in the Delta includes known HABs such as *Microcystis aeruginosa*. *Microcystis aeruginosa* has become a common bloom-forming component of the phytoplankton of the Delta during the warm summer and early fall months (Lehman et al. 2005, 2008). Interactions between nutrients and HABs in the Delta warrant additional study and are currently being investigated.

- **Nonnative a~~A~~quatic p~~P~~lants.** Nutrients affect the productivity of aquatic macrophytes (plants visible to the naked eye) and the structure of the aquatic plant community (Wetzel 2001).Two nonnative aquatic plants, Brazilian waterweed and water hyacinth, have become particularly problematic in the Delta. Scientific studies have documented the distribution and spread of these invasive aquatic plants in the Delta (Underwood et al. 2006; Hestir et al. 2008; Khanna et al. 2011; and Santos et al. 2011). The role of nutrient enrichment in the spread and productivity of these nonnative aquatic plants is unknown. Further research is required on the potential links between invasive aquatic plants in the Delta and nutrient inputs.

The effects of increased nutrient inputs also need to be considered in light of anticipated changes in the Delta with regard to lowered turbidity and warming temperatures. Figure 6-2 shows increasing nutrients in the Delta over time. As discussed in the following section, nutrients have been implicated in dissolved oxygen depletion in Delta channels due to the stimulation of plant growth with subsequent death and decay, and the microbial conversion of total ammonia to nitrate through the process of nitrification.

Dissolved Oxygen

Dissolved oxygen (DO) in water is essential to the survival of most fish and many other aquatic organisms. Depletion of DO in a water body because of decaying organic matter is a classic water quality problem that can result in clear signs of pollution, including ~~such as~~ fish kills and foul odors. Low DO concentrations also can have less obvious effects. DO events occur regularly in the channels of Suisun Marsh and the Stockton Deepwater Ship Channel and sporadically elsewhere in the Delta, with several waterways listed as impaired by the RWQCB.

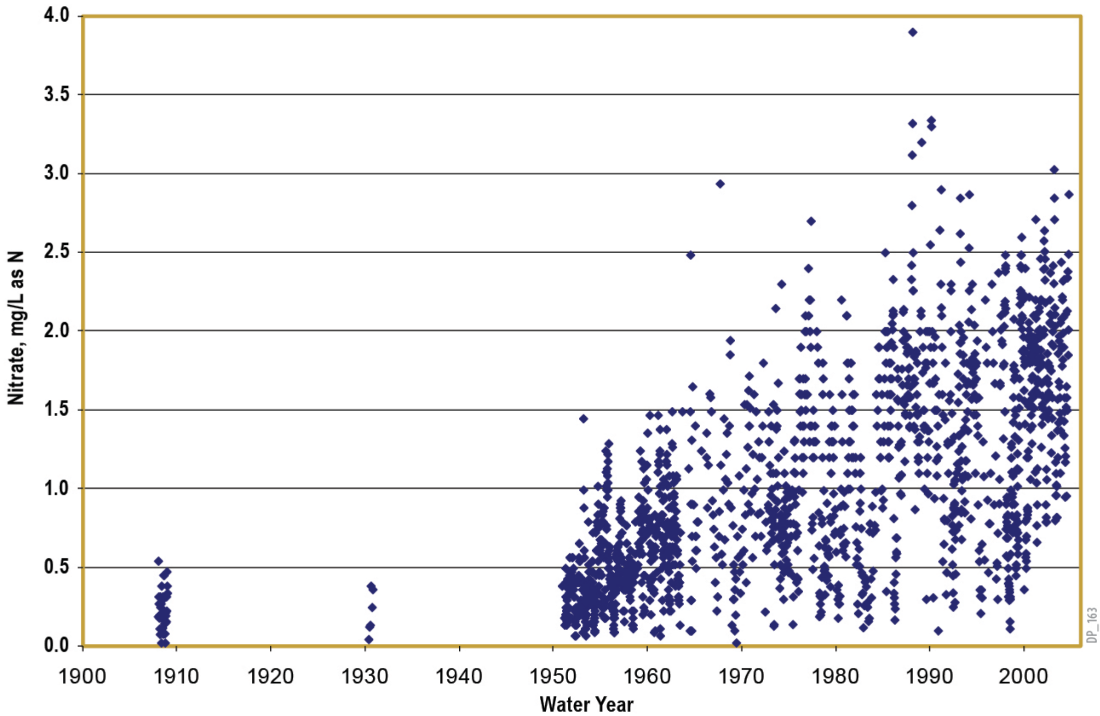

Figure 6-2

Nutrients Create Delta Water Problems

Nitrate concentrations at the point where the San Joaquin River enters the Delta dating back to 1908 show how much this important plant nutrient has increased. High nutrient concentrations are linked to a variety of problems including dissolved oxygen depletion, growth of nuisance aquatic plants, and taste and odor problems in drinking water.

Source: Adapted by the Delta Stewardship Council with data provided by USGS

NOTE: This graphic has been modified from the final staff draft (May 14, 2012) to make a stylistic correction.

One of the most significant water quality issues affecting the Delta in recent decades has been low DO episodes (DO concentrations less than regulatory objectives) in the Stockton Deepwater Ship Channel reach of the San Joaquin River in the Delta, which were thought to act as a barrier to salmon migration (Central Valley RWQCB 2005). Until the last few years, low DO events were a regular occurrence in this part of the Delta primarily during the summer and fall months.

The Stockton Deepwater Ship Channel DO problem has existed since at least the 1960s. The Central Valley RWQCB added this segment of the Delta to its list of impaired water bodies in 1998 and adopted a TMDL in 2005 that follows a phased approach requiring studies and initial actions followed by reconsideration of TMDL requirements in 2012. Extensive studies have identified several contributing factors, including inputs of algae from upstream (probably related to nutrient loads), discharges of total ammonia from the Stockton Regional Wastewater Control Facility, increased channel depth due to dredging, and reduced net flows (Central Valley RWQCB 2005). More information about how an adaptive management approach to DO in the Stockton Deepwater Ship Channel can be found in the sidebar titled Applying Adaptive Management in Water Quality Decisions.

APPLYING ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT IN WATER QUALITY DECISIONS

An adaptive management approach to water quality control decisions should be taken to plan for and assess their outcomes. The following is an example of how the Delta Stewardship Council's three-stage, nine-step adaptive management framework (see Appendix) was used for water quality decision making in the total maximum daily load (TMDL) process to improve dissolved oxygen (DO) concentrations in the Stockton Deep Water Ship Channel (SDWSC).

Adaptive Management Step			Improving DO Concentrations in the SDWSC
Plan	1	Define/redefine the problem	Low concentrations of DO in the SDWSC periodically exceeded the Central Valley Basin Plan water quality objectives for DO for many years. Low DO acted as a barrier to migrating salmon.
Plan	2	Establish goals and objectives	Goal: Meet the water quality objectives for DO in the SDWSC. Objectives: Maintain minimum DO concentrations of 5 milligrams per liter (mg/L) at all times and 6 mg/L Sept. – Nov.
Plan	3	Model linkages between objectives & proposed action(s)	Hydrodynamic and water quality models informed the development of a Physical and Chemical Processes Conceptual Model and a Biological and Ecological Effects Conceptual Model. The models identified at least four primary factors or processes influencing oxygen concentrations: (1) San Joaquin River flow through the SDWSC, (2) SDWSC volume, (3) algae and oxygen-demanding substances from the San Joaquin River upstream of the SDWSC, and (4) oxygen-demanding substances, including ammonia discharged from the Stockton Regional Wastewater Control Facility (RWCF). http://www.sjrdotmdl.org/concept_model/index.htm
Plan	4	Select action(s) (research, pilot, or full-scale) and develop performance measures	Selected Actions: (1) Conduct studies to identify causes for the low DO levels and assign responsibility to correct the problem; (2) reduce RWCF ammonia discharges to the San Joaquin River; and (3) construct a Demonstration Dissolved Oxygen Aeration Facility (Aeration Facility). Performance Measures: ▪ Administrative – Implement Phase I TMDL actions. ▪ Output – Implement studies; select wastewater treatment improvements to reduce ammonia discharges including engineered wetlands and nitrifying bio-towers; develop pilot-scale aeration project. ▪ Outcome – DO concentrations are maintained at or above the water quality objectives for DO. Aquatic life, including resident and migratory fish, is not affected by low DO conditions.
Do	5	Design & implement action(s)	Actions Selected: (1) Conduct ongoing studies to improve the conceptual models; (2) add engineered wetlands and two nitrifying bio-towers to the RWCF; and (3) design, build, and operate the Aeration Facility at Rough and Ready Island to determine its applicability for increasing DO concentrations in the SDWSC.
Do	6	Design & implement monitoring plan	Collect baseline DO data prior to aerator operations. Conduct ongoing studies to test the understanding of linkages in the conceptual models. Conduct compliance monitoring at the RWCF as required by the permit. Conduct performance monitoring of the Aeration Facility to measure achievement of the target (increased DO concentrations in the SDWSC).
Evaluate and Respond	7	Analyze, synthesize & evaluate	Technical Working Group assessment of the study results and aeration pilot-study results.
Evaluate and Respond	8	Communicate current understanding	Technical reports, study results, and web-based conceptual models were developed and maintained on a website. Pilot Report Aeration System and staff presentation to the Central Valley RWQCB (Feb. 3, 2011).
Evaluate and Respond	9	Adapt	Development of a revised control program (Phase II TMDL) including identification of additional or modified actions. Development of an aeration agreement with long-term funding for operation and maintenance of the Aeration Facility, including possible future modifications. Development of a system-level (long-term) monitoring plan for the Aeration Facility. Periodic review of control program actions and aerator operations.

DP_334

The improved wastewater treatment processes at the Stockton Regional Wastewater Control Facility were fully operational starting in 2006. This, along with other discharge reductions upstream, appears to have greatly reduced the frequency and severity of low DO episodes in the Stockton Deepwater Ship Channel. The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) aeration facility also has been shown to be an effective remedy for the occasional DO depletion problem that might occur under current conditions. The actions taken to comply with the current TMDL, along with improved flows and load reductions in the San Joaquin River watershed, appear to have provided a solution to this longstanding water quality problem. If continued, the actions taken to comply with the Stockton Deepwater Ship Channel TMDL should be sufficient to prevent future DO depletion problems.

The DO depletion problems in Suisun Marsh are caused by seasonal operations of ponds and wetlands managed for waterfowl hunting. For most of the year, duck club ponds are drained and occasionally flooded to promote the growth of plants that are the favored food of water fowl. When these ponds are flooded ~~up~~ for hunting in the late summer and fall, the decay of accumulated plant matter followed by tidal exchanges of water with adjoining channels can cause severe DO depletion. Some of these low DO events have caused documented fish kills. The San Francisco Bay RWQCB has started the TMDL process to address DO depletion in Suisun Marsh.

The best pathways to address other Delta low DO problems will vary with local conditions and causes, but likely will be a combination of reduced loadings of oxygen-demanding substances and changes to flow conditions, under the framework of adaptive management. As TMDLs are developed to address low DO concentrations in the Delta, actions needed to improve DO conditions will be implemented through SWRCB and regional water quality control board programs, including NPDES permits, stormwater NPDES permits, ~~the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program~~WDRs, waivers of WDRs~~,~~ and water rights. Low DO conditions in the Delta need to be addressed to prevent these conditions from increasing in extent and severity.

Pesticides

Pesticides include insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, and various other substances used to control pests. In the Bay-Delta region, the primary pesticides of concern include the organophosphorus (OP) pesticides (for example, diazinon and chlorpyrifos), pyrethroid insecticides, and the legacy organochlorine pesticides (for example, DDT, chlordane, and dieldrin). These substances are known to have adverse impacts on aquatic organisms or, in some cases (as with the organochlorine pesticides), birds and mammals.

The Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Feather rivers; the Delta; and numerous agriculturally dominated streams in the Central Valley are either listed as impaired or are covered under an existing TMDL for pesticides (Central Valley RWQCB 1998, 2006). Delta waterways were placed on the CWA section 303(d) list for diazinon and chlorpyrifos due to aquatic toxicity (SWRCB 2010~~a~~).

Smaller agriculturally dominated waterways and urban creeks are particularly vulnerable to toxicity from pesticides. Although agriculture is considered the primary source of pesticide impairment in the Central Valley and Delta, urban sources are also locally important (Kuivila and Hladik 2008). Some of the highest pesticide concentrations have been observed in residential area creeks and waters receiving urban runoff (Weston et al. 2005). Pyrethroid insecticides, which are ~~the~~ common replacements ~~of~~ for the OP pesticides, have been implicated as the principal pesticides causing toxicity in surface water samples collected from throughout California (Hunt et al. 2010).

Aquatic invertebrates in the water column are the organisms most affected by chlorpyrifos and diazinon exposure (Giddings et al. 2000); however, pyrethroids—because of their high potential to stick to organic matter—also can affect sediment-dwelling organisms (Werner and Oram 2008; Weston et al. 2004).

Pyrethroid pesticides from multiple runoff sources have been~~, largely from urban and suburban runoff, are regularly~~ found at levels toxic to aquatic invertebrates (Weston et al. 2005; Weston ~~and Lydy~~ 2010).

Contaminants cannot be eliminated as a possible contributor to ~~Although contaminants are unlikely to be a major cause of~~ the declines in open-water fish populations in the Delta (known as pelagic organism decline [POD])~~, they cannot be eliminated as a possible contributor~~. Johnson et al. (2010) reported that insufficient data are available to determine whether contaminants played an important role in the POD. Research on the role of contaminants in the POD continues with efforts under way to better define the presence of contaminants in the environment, the effects of contaminant mixtures, sublethal effects of contaminants on the POD species, and the effects of contaminants on prey organisms (Baxter et al. 2010). Synergistic effects of pesticide mixtures have been demonstrated for other species including juvenile salmon (Laetz et. al. 2009).

Mercury

The Delta and many Delta tributaries are included in the SWRCB's section 303(d) list of impaired water bodies due to mercury contamination (Central Valley RWQCB 2009). Historical mercury mining in California's Coast Ranges and mercury use associated with gold mining in the Sierra Nevada over a century ago have left an environmental legacy of pervasive mercury contamination in many northern California watersheds (Alpers and Hunerlach 2000). The current regulatory approach for mercury includes the mercury TMDL adopted by the San Francisco Bay RWQCB in 2006 and the Delta methylmercury TMDL adopted by the Central Valley RWQCB in 2010. Unfortunately, however, mercury is likely to persist in California's environment for many years to come.

Mercury is transformed into methylmercury by bacteria in the environment. ~~This m~~Methylmercury, initially present at very low concentrations, enters the aquatic food web and can accumulate to levels of concern in long-lived fish at the top of the aquatic food chain, such as striped bass and largemouth bass. Methylmercury has been found in some types of Delta fish at concentrations that may be harmful to human health. The State has issued health advisories for fish consumption due to mercury contamination for a number of water bodies in the Delta and its watersheds. Mercury contamination of fish is of particular concern for people who are frequent consumers of Delta fish (Shilling 2009).

There is general concern that increased concentrations of methylmercury in water, sediment, and plants and animals might result from restoration of wetland and floodplain habitats in the Delta and, thus, must be carefully planned and monitored to minimize the production of methylmercury. For instance, the restoration of wetlands, particularly in areas where the abundance of mercury in soils or sediments is elevated, could accelerate the production of methylmercury and increase the contamination of aquatic plants and animals (Naimo et al. 2000,~~;~~ Wiener and Shields 2000). Additionally, flooding of wetlands or uplands or fluctuating water levels during tidal cycles could stimulate methylmercury production and transport, thereby increasing concentrations of methylmercury in water and in plants and animals (Hecky et al. 1991,~~;~~ Hall et al. 1998,~~;~~ Paterson et al. 1998,~~;~~ Bodaly and Fudge 1999). Increased methylmercury production is a significant concern for planned wetland and floodplain ecosystem restoration projects, and should be monitored.

Further study is needed to determine the dominant processes affecting methylmercury concentrations in food webs in the Delta. The CALFED Ecosystem Restoration Program developed a framework (Mercury Strategy) for monitoring, research, risk communication, and adaptive management to address mercury problems in the Bay-Delta system (Wiener et al. 2003). The approach taken by the Central Valley RWQCB in its Delta Mercury Control Program, adopted April 22, 2010, is consistent with the Mercury Strategy (Central Valley RWQCB 2010).

Selenium

Selenium, a naturally occurring element, is an essential nutrient at low concentrations for humans and other organisms. However, higher concentrations can be toxic to fish and wildlife. Once selenium enters the aquatic environment, it has a high potential to bioaccumulate in zooplankton and benthic (~~deep water~~bottom-dwelling) invertebrates and, subsequently, to biomagnify in the food web as it reaches top-level predators such as fish, birds, and mammals (Skorupa and Ohlendorf 1991,~~;~~ Fan et al. 2002,~~;~~ Hamilton 2004,~~;~~ Stewart et al. 2004,~~;~~ Paveglio and Kilbride 2007).

The major source of selenium loading to San Francisco Bay is the San Joaquin River, which receives selenium-laden agricultural drainage waters from the western San Joaquin Valley (Luoma and Presser 2000). Other sources of selenium loading include oil refineries, municipal and industrial wastewater, urban and nonurban runoff, atmospheric deposition, and erosion and sediment transport from within the north San Francisco Bay. Improved wastewater treatment at petroleum refineries discharging into San Francisco Bay has reduced the amount of selenium discharged, but these facilities are still the most significant point source of this pollutant (San Francisco Bay RWQCB 2011b).

Recent monitoring results indicate that selenium water column concentrations in the north San Francisco Bay are much lower than the current 5~~ micrograms per liter~~ ppb ~~standard~~ objective for chronic exposure (San Francisco Bay RWQCB 2011b). However, levels of selenium in aquatic organisms and fish show that the current regulatory criteria may not be sufficient. Despite progress to reduce selenium in the Bay-Delta system, levels in the food chain are still of concern. Selenium has been identified as a possible contributing factor to the observed decline of white sturgeon, Sacramento splittail, starry flounder, and diving ducks such as surf scoters. The focus of regulatory efforts at the State and national level is shifting from water-column concentrations to the concentration of selenium in the tissues of affected organisms (San Francisco Bay RWQCB 2011b).

Historically, portions of the San Joaquin River downstream of Grasslands, Salt Slough, and Mud Slough contained elevated levels of selenium from agricultural drainage (Saiki et al. 1993). The discharge of selenium from this area also has been significantly reduced from historical levels under a control program administered by Central Valley RWQCB, with plans for further reductions through 2019 (Reclamation 2009).

Contaminants of Emerging Concern

The term “contaminants of emerging concern” refers to a broad class of largely unregulated compounds for which there is concern that adverse effects might occur at environmentally significant concentrations. Examples of manufactured chemicals frequently found in water bodies and organisms include flame retardants, pesticides, human and veterinary pharmaceuticals, and ingredients in personal care products (Kolpin et al. 2002,~~;~~ Daughton 2004,~~;~~ Hoenicke et al. 2007).

Contaminants of emerging concern include many manufactured chemicals. These manufactured chemicals have the potential to alter water quality because of their widespread use, pathways to the environment, and potency. The primary sources for most contaminants of emerging concern include effluent~~s~~ from wastewater treatment plants, agricultural fields, and stormwater runoff. Many chemicals identified as contaminants of emerging concern have not been tested for their potential toxic effects on aquatic life. Most emerging pollutant maximum concentrations in the environment are well below established lethal concentration values for even the most sensitive aquatic species. Sublethal and chronic low-level exposures are of primary concern (Oros 2003,~~;~~ Brander et al. 2009,~~;~~ Ostrach 2009).

Regulatory and chemical monitoring programs should adapt to the quickly changing mix of contaminants of emerging concern identified through current studies and the peer-reviewed scientific literature (best available science). Effective management of contaminants of emerging concern in the Delta will require responsible agencies to perform appropriate scanning-level activities to prioritize a specific list of pollutants of highest concern and to develop or require work plans for special studies, and to conduct or require monitoring in accordance with the work plans. To this end, in ~~2009~~ 2011 the SWRCB established a Science Advisory Panel to address contaminants of emerging concern ~~in accordance with their Recycled Water Policy~~ in aquatic ecosystems. The panel completed a report in ~~2010~~ April 2012 that included several recommendations for how the SWRCB should monitor and assess potential impacts of contaminants of emerging concern (~~SWRCB 2010b~~Anderson et al. 2010).

Policies and Recommendations

Policies and recommendations to address the water quality issues discussed in the preceding sections are based on the following strategies:

- Require Delta-specific water quality protection
- Protect beneficial uses by managing salinity
- Improve drinking water quality
- Improve environmental water quality

These major aspects of water quality are critical to achieving the coequal goals. The approach described here includes augmenting or accelerating existing programs where it is feasible to address an existing or anticipated water quality problem. The SWRCB and RWQCBs have broad authority to protect and regulate water quality; therefore, this chapter sets forth priority Delta-specific recommendations and does not contain regulatory policies at this time.

Require Delta-specific Water Quality Protection

Water flow, water quality, water supply, and habitat conditions in the Delta are distinctly different from other parts of the watershed and from San Francisco Bay downstream. The Delta~~It~~ is the most valuable estuary and wetland ecosystem on the west coast of North and South America (Water Code section 85002) and is the primary habitat for a number of special-status species. Many communities in and around the Delta draw their drinking water directly from Delta waterways. Delta waterways also receive urban stormwater, treated wastewater, agricultural drainage, and drainage from managed wetlands. Studies have shown that such discharges can have significant impacts on water quality. These impacts are often more severe near the point of discharge. Stormwater, wastewater, and agricultural drainage discharges into the Delta should be managed so that they do not pose a significant risk to the beneficial uses of water in the Delta.

Problem Statement

Water quality management approaches developed for general application statewide or in other regions may not be sufficient for the unique and dynamic conditions of the Delta, its biological resources, and critical water supply services. Water supplies and habitats for special-status species require proactive and anticipatory measures for water quality protection consistent with their importance in achieving the coequal goals.

Policies

No policies with regulatory effect are included in this section.

Recommendations

WQ R1 Protect Beneficial Uses

Water quality in the Delta should be maintained at a level that supports, enhances, and protects beneficial uses identified in the applicable State Water Resources Control Board or regional water quality control board water quality control plans.

WQ R2 Identify Covered Action Impacts

Covered actions should identify any significant impacts to water quality.

WQ R3 Special Water Quality Protections for the Delta

The State Water Resources Control Board or regional water quality control board should evaluate and, if appropriate, propose special water quality protections for priority habitat restoration areas identified in recommendation ER R1 or other areas of the Delta where new or increased discharges of pollutants could adversely impact beneficial uses.

Protect Beneficial Uses by Managing Salinity

Beneficial uses within the Delta include drinking water, agriculture, and ecosystem protection. Salinity potentially affects these uses, but to varying degrees. The primary sources of salinity in the Delta are from tidal seawater intrusion from the Pacific Ocean through the San Francisco Bay, and to a lesser extent from agricultural and other discharges in the Central Valley. Historically, natural flows through the Delta regulated salinity in a way that favored the Delta ecosystem. Today, salinity in the Delta is dominated by the effects of upstream water diversions and use of the Delta to convey flows to central and southern California. The SWRCB is responsible for ensuring protection of beneficial uses through regulation of pollutant discharges, and regulation of water diversions and flows under their water rights authority.

Problem Statement

Salinity affects Delta agricultural, municipal, and environmental beneficial uses, but in different ways. ~~Currently, s~~Salinity and flow conditions in the Delta are affecting ecosystem, agricultural, and municipal uses. The timing and distribution of salinity is primarily affected by flow, which is largely determined by water management in the Delta and its watersheds as determined by applicable flow objectives. Delta conditions have changed since the current Delta flow objectives were adopted, and new scientific information about salinity, flow, and their effects on beneficial uses is available.

Policies

ER P1 in Chapter 4 on the SWRCB's Update of Water Quality Objectives addresses this issue.

Improve Drinking Water Quality

Millions of Californians entirely or partially rely on the Delta as a drinking water supply, and the future quality of that water supply is uncertain. Contamination of groundwater supplies places greater demand on surface waters that are tributary to the Delta for urban and agricultural users. Current water quality regulations and policies for surface waters do not apply directly to many of the drinking water quality constituents of concern. Sea level rise, levee failure, salinity variability, agricultural water use, and increased urban runoff from population growth in the watershed all pose a threat to drinking water quality. To prevent such degradation, we need clear policies regarding the protection of water quality relevant to the drinking water quality constituents of concern. The Central Valley RWQCB's anticipated drinking water policy is intended, in part, to prevent the degradation of high-quality drinking water sources (Central Valley RWQCB 2010).

In 2006, the SWRCB, the Central Valley RWQCB, and stakeholders began a joint effort to address salinity and nitrate problems in California's Central Valley and adopt long-term solutions that will lead to enhanced water quality and economic sustainability. Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long-Term Sustainability (CV-SALTS) is a collaborative basin planning effort aimed at developing and implementing a comprehensive salinity and nitrate management program.

Problem Statement

Delta drinking water supplies are degraded by inputs from sea water, regional soils, and sediments; from agricultural, urban, and industrial sources from the watershed; and from in-Delta sources.

Policies

No policies with regulatory effect are included in this section.

Recommendations

WQ R4 Complete Central Valley Drinking Water Policy

The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board should complete the Central Valley Drinking Water Policy by July 2013.

WQ R5 Complete North Bay Aqueduct Alternative Intake Project

The Department of Water Resources should complete the North Bay Aqueduct Alternate Intake Project EIR by ~~July 1~~December 31, 2012, and begin construction as soon as possible thereafter.

WQ R6 Protect Groundwater Beneficial Uses

The State Water Resources Control Board should complete development of a Strategic Workplan for protection of groundwater beneficial uses, including groundwater use for drinking water, by December 31, 2012.

WQ R7 Participation in CV-SALTS

The State Water Resources Control Board and Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board should consider requiring participation by all relevant water users that are supplied water from the Delta or the Delta Watershed or discharge wastewater to the Delta or the Delta Watershed to participate in the Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long-Term Sustainability Program ~~(CV-SALTS)~~.

Improve Environmental Water Quality

A variety of pollutants are discharged into Delta and tributary waters. These pollutants affect Delta biological species and ecosystem processes. Pollutants of concern include nutrients, pesticides, mercury, selenium, and other persistent bioaccumulative toxic substances. Newly identified pollutants of potential concern (emerging contaminants) also need to be investigated.

Problem Statement

Pollutants contained in municipal, industrial, agricultural, other nonpoint source discharges, and legacy sources flowing into the Delta and its tributary waterways, including pollutants that bioaccumulate and biomagnify in the food web, impair the Delta ecosystem. Evidence from water quality and ecosystem monitoring continues to show that significant water pollution problems persist in the Bay-Delta system and the Central Valley. Insufficient funding and support could lead to slowing or even terminating of SWRCB and the San Francisco Bay and Central Valley RWQCBs' engagements in regulatory processes, research, and monitoring that are essential to improving water quality in the Delta.

Policies

No policies with regulatory effect are included in this section.

Recommendations

WQ R8 Completion of Regulatory Processes, Research, and Monitoring for Water Quality Improvements

The State Water Resources Control Board and the San Francisco Bay and Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Boards are currently engaged in regulatory processes, research, and monitoring essential to improving water quality in the Delta. In order to achieve the coequal goals, it is essential that these ongoing efforts be completed and if possible accelerated, and that the Legislature and Governor devote sufficient funding to make this possible. The Delta Stewardship Council specifically recommends that:

- The State Water Resources Control Board should complete development of the proposed Policy for nutrients for Inland Surface Waters of the State of California by January 1, 2014.
- The State Water Resources Control Board and the San Francisco Bay and Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Boards should prepare and begin implementation of a study plan for the development of objectives~~,~~ for nutrients in the Delta and Suisun Marsh by January 1, 201~~3~~4. Studies needed for development of Delta and Suisun Marsh nutrient objectives should be completed by January 1, 2016. The Water Boards should adopt and begin implementation of nutrient objectives, either narrative or numeric, where appropriate, for the Delta and Suisun Marsh by January 1, 2018.
- The State Water Resources Control Board and the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board should complete the Central Valley Pesticide Total Maximum Daily Load and Basin Plan Amendment for diazinon and chlorpyrifos by January 1, 2013.
- The State Water Resources Control Board and the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board prioritize and accelerate the completion of the Central Valley Pesticide Total Maximum Daily Load and Basin Plan Amendment for pyrethroids by January 1, 2016.
- The State Water Resources Control Board, San Francisco Bay and Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Boards have completed Total Maximum Daily Load and Basin Plan Amendments for methylmercury and efforts to support their implementation should be coordinated. Parties identified as responsible for current methylmercury loads or proponents of projects that may increase methylmercury loading in the Delta or Suisun Marsh should participate in control studies or implement site-specific study plans that evaluate practices to minimize methylmercury discharges. The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board should review these control studies by December 31, 2018 and determine control measures for implementation starting in 2020.~~The State Water Resources Control Board and the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board should complete the Phase 2 control plan for the Total Maximum Daily Load and Basin Plan Amendment for dissolved oxygen in the Stockton Ship Channel by January 1, 2015. Parties identified as responsible for dissolved oxygen depletion in the Stockton Ship Channel in the current TMDL should fund the operation and maintenance of the aeration system until the Regional Water Board adopts a Phase 2 control plan.~~
- ~~The State Water Resources Control Board and the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board should complete the Total Maximum Daily Load and Basin Plan Amendment for dissolved oxygen in Suisun Marsh Wetlands by January 1, 2013.~~

WQ R9 Implement Delta Regional Monitoring Program

The State Water Resources Control Board and Regional Water Quality Control Boards should work collaboratively with the Department of Water Resources, Department of Fish and Game, and other agencies and entities that monitor water quality in the Delta to develop and implement a Delta Regional Monitoring Program that will be responsible for coordinating monitoring efforts so Delta conditions can be efficiently assessed and reported on a regular basis.

WQ R10 Evaluate Wastewater Recycling, Reuse, or Treatment

The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, consistent with existing w~~W~~ater q~~Q~~uality c~~C~~ontrol ~~P~~plan policies and water rights law, should require responsible entities that discharge wastewater treatment plant effluent or urban runoff to Delta waters to evaluate whether all or a portion of the discharge can be recycled, otherwise used, or treated in order to reduce contaminant loads to the Delta by January 1, 2014.

WQ R11 Manage Dissolved Oxygen in Stockton Ship Channel

The State Water Resources Control Board and the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board should complete Phase 2 of the Total Maximum Daily Load and Basin Plan Amendment for dissolved oxygen in the Stockton Ship Channel by January 1, 2015~~3~~.

WQ R12 Manage Dissolved Oxygen in Suisun Marsh

The State Water Resources Control Board and the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board should complete the Total Maximum Daily Load and Basin Plan Amendment for dissolved oxygen in Suisun Marsh Wetlands by January 1, 2014.

Timeline for Implementing Policies and Recommendations

Figure 6-3 lays out a ~~preliminary~~ timeline for implementing the policies and recommendations described in the previous section. The timeline emphasizes near-term and intermediate-term actions.

Science and Information Needs

Successful management of water quality depends on a well-designed, comprehensive, and consistent system of water quality monitoring. Current Delta water quality monitoring is fragmented between several different agencies and programs. The Central Valley RWQCB has initiated an effort to develop a Delta Regional Monitoring Program that will consolidate and coordinate most of the current monitoring. Developing a coordinated and thorough regional monitoring program is essential to performance measurement and adaptive management in the Delta.

As identified above, there are a number of outstanding science questions that need to be resolved with respect to water quality. Additional study is needed on the following:

- The effects of salinity on introduced and native plant and animal species
- Trends in concentrations of drinking water constituents of concern
- The effects of nutrients on the Delta ecosystem and municipal water supplies
    - The importance of phytoplankton bloom suppression from ammonium
    - The role of nutrient loading on HABs in the Delta
    - Possible linkages between nonnative aquatic plants and nutrient inputs

- Controlling DO depletion
- The ~~low-level~~ effects of the simultaneous presence of multiple pesticides, even at low levels, on species of concern ~~in the ecosystem~~
- The processes contributing to mercury and selenium compounds in food webs and their effects on the ecosystem
- The impacts of pharmaceutical compounds, personal care products, and other emerging contaminants on the ecosystem
- The combined effects of multiple contaminants and water quality conditions on the ecosystem
- Sources and impacts of pathogens on drinking water sources and recreation in the Delta
- An analysis and evaluation of existing water quality models in the Delta
- Fate and transport of water quality contaminants in the Delta

TIMELINE **CHAPTER 6: Improve Water Quality**

	ACTION (REFERENCE #)	**LEAD AGENCY(IES)**	**NEAR TERM** 2012–2017	**INTERMEDIATE TERM** 2017–2025
RECOMMENDATIONS	Protect beneficial uses (WQ R1)	Varies	●	●
	Identify covered action impacts (WQ R2)	Varies	●	●
	Special water quality protections for the Delta (WQ R3)	SWRCB, RWQCB	●	
	Complete Central Valley drinking water policy (WQ R4)	Central Valley RWQCB	●	
	Complete the North Bay Aqueduct Alternative Intake Project (WQ R5)	DWR	●	
	Protect groundwater beneficial uses (WQ R6)	SWRCB	●	
	Participation in CV-SALTS* (WQ R7)	SWRCB and Central Valley RWQCB	●	
	Completion of regulatory processes, research, and monitoring for water quality improvements (WQ R8)	SWRCB, San Francisco Bay and Central Valley RWQCBs	●	
	Implement Delta regional monitoring program (WQ R9)	SWRCB and RWQCBs	●	
	Evaluate wastewater recycling, reuse, or treatment (WQ R10)	Central Valley RWQCB	●	
	Manage dissolved oxygen in Stockton Ship Channel (WQ R11)	SWRCB and Central Valley RWQCB	●	
	Manage dissolved oxygen in Suisun Marsh (WQ R12)	SWRCB and San Francisco Bay RWQCB	●	

*CV-SALTS: Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long-Term Sustainability Program

DP_345

Agency Key:

Council: Delta Stewardship Council
DWR: Department of Water Resources
RWQCB: Regional Water Quality Control Board(s)
SWRCB: State Water Resources Control Board

Figure 6-3
Timeline for Implementing Policies and Recommendations

NOTE: This graphic has been modified from the final staff draft (May 14, 2012) to make a stylistic correction.

Issues for Future Evaluation and Coordination

Additional areas of interest and concern related to water quality and the Delta may deserve consideration in the development of future Delta Plan updates, including the following:

- **Small and disadvantaged communities:** Ensuring a safe drinking water supply can have a disproportionate cost for small and disadvantaged communities. Delta communities that are small and disadvantaged include Bethel Island, Courtland, Freeport, Hood, Isleton, Locke, and Walnut Grove. Options available to small, disadvantaged communities to correct unsafe drinking water conditions include consolidation with a larger water system; consolidation of several small systems into a single, larger system; centralized treatment; interim point-of-use treatment or use of bottled water; replacement of a contaminated source with an uncontaminated source; and, in the case of chemical contamination, blending of contaminated sources with uncontaminated sources. Availability and prioritization of funding, restructuring of regulatory requirements, and provision of technical assistance may all be part of the solution, but involve the authority of various agencies including the Department of Public Health, ~~the~~ SWRCB, ~~and~~ DWR, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local cities and counties. An integrated effort including the input and involvement of the regulatory and affected agencies will be needed to properly address these issues and to refine effective recommendations.

- **Coordinated and prioritized water quality monitoring and modeling:** Various water quality monitoring and modeling efforts are ongoing, but are not coordinated among affected agencies. Agencies involved in these efforts include the SWRCB, RWQCBs, DWR, the Interagency Ecological Program, DFG, and now, the Council. Collective discussion and evaluation by these and other entities will be needed in order to make recommendations regarding the need for and prioritization of water quality modeling in the Delta.

- **Contaminants of emerging concern:** The SWRCB and RWQCBs should continue ongoing efforts to address contaminants of emerging concern. This work should include development of a work plan for conducting or requiring special studies of pollutants including emerging contaminants and causes of toxicity in Delta waters and sediments.

- **Water quality objectives for selenium:** The identified sources of selenium as a contaminant and its potential to bioaccumulate and biomagnify in the environment are ongoing concerns. The SWRCB and San Francisco Bay and Central Valley RWQCBs should continue efforts to revise water quality objectives for selenium.

Performance Measures

Development of informative and meaningful performance measures is a challenging task that will continue after the adoption of the Delta Plan. Performance measures need to be designed to capture important trends and to address whether specific actions are producing expected results. Efforts to develop and track performance measures in complex and large-scale systems like the Delta are commonly multiyear endeavors. The recommended output and outcome performance measures listed below are provided as examples and subject to refinement as time and resources allow. Final administrative performance measures are listed in Appendix C and will be tracked as soon as the Delta Plan is completed.~~Development of informative and sensitive performance measures is a challenging task that will continue after the adoption of the Delta Plan. Performance measures need to be designed to capture important trends and to address whether specific actions are producing expected results. Efforts to develop performance measures in complex and large-scale systems like the Delta are commonly~~

~~multiyear endeavors. The recommended performance measures are provisional and subject to refinement as time and resources allow.~~

Output Performance Measures

- DWR begins constructing the North Bay Aqueduct Alternate Intake Project as soon as possible after the EIR is completed. (WQ R~~2~~5)
- Progress toward reducing concentrations of inorganic nutrients (ammonium, nitrate, and phosphate) in Delta waters over the next decade. (WQ R8~~5~~)
- TMDLs for critical pesticides (for example, diazinon, chlorpyrifos, and pyrethroids) in the waters and sediments of the Delta are met by 2020. (WQ R8~~5~~)
- ~~Progress towards identification of contaminants of emerging concern in the Delta and development of appropriate source control strategies. (WQ R5)~~
- A Delta regional water quality monitoring program is implemented within the first 5 years of the Delta Plan. (WQ R9~~6~~)

Outcome Performance Measures

- Water quality in the Delta meets objectives established in the applicable water quality control plan. (WQ R1)
- Trends in measureable toxicity from pesticides and other pollutants in Delta waters will be downward over the next decade. (WQ R8~~5~~)
- Progress toward consistently meeting applicable dissolved oxygen standards in the Delta by 2020. (WQ R8~~5~~, WQ R11, and WQ R12)
- Harmful algal blooms (HABs) will lessen in severity and spatial coverage in the Delta over the next decade. (WQ R3~~5~~ and WQ R8)
- The spatial distribution and productivity of nuisance nonnative aquatic plants will decline over the next decade. (WQ R3~~5~~ and WQ R8)

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